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ABSTRACT

Curriculum processes in representative areas of four large Western countries are investigated. Countries involved in the study include Australia, Canada, England, and the United States, which is represented by Georgia. Core curricula in these countries are markedly similar. Data on curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation were collected via a mail survey of secondary school principals randomly selected from lists of principals supplied by the ministry or department of education in each country, province, or state involved. Only secondary, publicly funded schools were sampled. A slightly revised version of the Gallaudet University Curriculum Development Process Survey was used as the survey instrument. The instrument was mailed to 1,030 secondary school principals; on the basis of two mailings, 599 usable surveys were obtained. Eighteen hypotheses were studied using the data collected. Results indicate some confusion among school leaders on responsibilities for curriculum decisions, along with a desire to include a variety of constituencies in the processes. Teacher involvement was particularly emphasized across countries. Each group of principals acknowledged that massive curriculum development or revision was underway due to centralized mandates. The survey instrument--the Curriculum Development Process Survey--is appended. (TJH)

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Curriculum Development, Implementation, and Evaluation: A Cross-Cultural Study of Secondary Schools in Australia, Canada, England, and the State of Georgia

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Marietta, GA.

Session: Curriculum of the Many Cultures of our Children
AERA, Division B
Tuesday, March 28, 1989

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Our session is entitled, Curriculum of the Many Cultures of our Children. If we are to examine this topic, we must identify the nature of decisionmaking in and for our schools internationally. Who makes curriculum decisions? What factors are considered in those decisions? How is curriculum developed? How is it implemented in schools? How do school leaders judge whether the curriculum is working in the best interests of our children? These are the questions which interest me and which I have addressed in this study.

The content of curricula cross-culturally has been examined repeatedly in the past quarter century by such organizations as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and others. The findings of such studies have been widely publicized in the popular media, largely in the form of comparisons of standardized test scores. But such comparisons seem oddly incomplete. Analysis of curriculum processes in different societies appears both timely and logical given this prior research and the present era of heightened interest. Processes may be at least as important as the content taught in schools.

The rather cumbersome title of my presentation reflects my attempt to investigate curriculum processes in representative areas of four large Western countries. The four areas, Australia, Canada, England, and the state of Georgia in the US, were selected because they are similar in terms of language, historical orientation regarding education, and Western culture.

Comparative research is often perceived to be most effective when somewhat similar populations are studied. Core curriculum in these Western countries are markedly similar. (Cawelti, 1986)

The present research identified trends in curriculum decisionmaking in three areas - development, implementation, and evaluation - according to secondary school principals surveyed by mail. The principals were randomly selected from available lists supplied by the Ministers or Departments of Education in each country, province, or state. Only secondary, publicly-funded schools were sampled. I used the instrument entitled the Gallaudet University Curriculum Development Process Survey, with minor revisions and permission from authors, Martin, Saif, and Thiel. (You will find a copy of the instrument in your handout.) The questionnaire was originally administered by Martin, Saif, and Thiel to 200 curriculum directors and/or school administrators throughout the United States. Ninety-one administrators responded in that original study. Due to the interests of time and expense, the present study utilized only principals from the state of Georgia, but results from the original study were also considered for comparative purposes in order to determine in which aspects Georgia was representative of the United States as a whole.

Surveys for the present study were mailed to 1030 secondary school principals. After two mailings, 599 usable surveys were completed and returned. Eighteen hypotheses were investigated utilizing the data gathered. (A copy of the eighteen hypotheses

is also found in your handout.) It is most expeditious to review the results of the study briefly within the global headings of curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation.

DEVELOPMENT

1. Principals did not consider themselves responsible for curriculum development, nor did they seem to have consistent, identifiable strategies for developing curriculum at the local level.

2. Language arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science are most often revised, according to the principals surveyed.

3. Principals surveyed preferred moderate to heavy involvement of <u>teachers</u> in the curriculum development process, (even though they readily confessed that such involvement is not frequent).

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Principals <u>did</u> consider themselves responsible for curriculum implementation.

2. Secondly, principals cross-culturally appeared to use similar strategies for implementing and checking on the degree of curriculum implementation in their schools. These strategies include: classroom observation, standardized test monitoring, teacher conferencing, and monitoring of teacher lesson plans.

IN OTHER WORDS, PRINCIPALS SEEM TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING CURRICULUM WHICH HAS BEEN <u>DEVELOPED</u> AT THE STATE, PROVINCIAL, OR NATIONAL LEVELS.

EVALUATION

1. Which is better? Qualitative or quantitative evaluation methods? Principals in this study seemed undecided. Principals in Australia, Canada, and England all appeared to prefer qualitative evaluation, while Georgia principals appeared to cite quantitative preferences more often, (although many cited the need for both). It seems that no type of curriculum evaluation can be eliminated and all types may be effective, depending on the purpose of the evaluation. It may be that quantitative measures, i.e., standardized test scores, are but one measure of effectiveness and may not reveal all pertinent information necessary in order to evaluate curriculum.

2. Many principals readily noted their lack of expertise in and time for evaluation of any kind.

3. Many once again cited the need for teacher involvement in all aspects of curriculum planning, but expressed the need for time and training to implement such.

One Australian principal wrote, "Effective evaluation (is) often ignored in Australia. It is a pity. I repeat that we must be more concerned about in-building evaluation arrangements when we develop curriculum."

4. It appeared that many principals, in their anecdotal and narrative responses recognized the limited usefulness of standardized tests as the sole measure of curriculum effectiveness and would be responsive to efforts to design more qualitatively oriented instruments for evaluating curricula.

SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

First, each group of principals surveyed acknowledged that they were in the throes of massive kinds of curriculum development and/or revision due to centralized mandates. Such rapid changes appear to be leaving these school leaders not only breathless, but also skeptical as to the value of the changes and the methods of implementing change. Such common disillusionment suggests the need for policy makers to consider the needs of the leaders in the local school buildings who are ultimately responsible for what and how our children learn. One English headmaster writes, "I am much disturbed by the ardent lack of true consultation." Another explains, "Imposed changes are often doomed to failure. School-based (curriculum work) seems to work far more effectively than an external body imposing."

Secondly, there appear to be vast differences between who develops, who implements, and who evaluates curriculum. Decisions appear to be a matter of control. Control is usually defined in terms of which decisions are made at each level of the educational hierarchy. In the 1980's, we are seeing evidence in Western societies of increasingly standardized and centralized modes of curricular control. One principal from Ontario, Canada reported witnessing "distinctive discouragement of local initiative and a reduction in the amount of money and time available for local curriculum work."

In England, schools are presently in the midst of implementing the first year of the National Curriculum for publicly funded education. "Pupils should be entitled to the

same opportunities wherever they go to school", this curriculum document states (National Curriculum p. 3). English principals in this study appear to accept the need for a national framework for curriculum. Almost 52% of responding English principals expressed a preference for a national curriculum. However, 64% also expressed a preference for a local curriculum. This apparent contradiction may not in fact be contradictory. Narrative responses appeared to indicate that principals in England were willing to incorporate national guidelines, but they also strongly advocated the involvement of local teachers and communities in curriculum matters. We see once again that concept of teacher ownership as an essential component.

One English headmaster writes:

> In England at this time, we are being overwhelmed with new initiatives, based on political dogma and in error without research support. For any curriculum innovation to succeed, initiatives must come from the grassroots - from the classroom teacher.

In Canada, control of education is vested by the Constitution in the provincial governments. The federal government has no authority in education. Therefore, there is considerable variety among the provinces. Recently, there seems to be a great deal of controversy concerning the amount of local versus centralized control over schools, despite the fact that the central or provincial government ultimately presides. (Guldemond, 1986)

As in England, Canadian principals opted for both local and

provincial control of curriculum. They too appeared to be involved in considerable curriculum development and revision due to centralized mandates for education.

Provinces and local schools in Australia appear to be investigating optimal means of sharing responsibility and accountability. The utilization of local curriculum committees to implement change seems to be widely accepted in Australia. External examinations, however, control curricular content considerably, especially for the last 2 years of secondary schooling. Many schools in Australia are quite small and isolated. Principals in such schools expressed gratitude for centralized processes which would be most difficult in remote settings with limited resources. Still, Australian school leaders affirmed the role of classroom teachers in curriculum processes. "For real change to take place, the teachers concerned must be part of the planning. Otherwise, it will result in superficial and cosmetic changes only," wrote one Australian.

In the state of Georgia, public education is also in a state of reform. In 1985, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) which details the specific aspects of reform. The QBE act makes specific provisions for a statewide basic curriculum. In the present study, a larger percentage of principals from Georgia expressed a preference for local control of curriculum than did principals from the other three groups (68.6%). Georgia principals affirmed the importance of the classroom teacher, as did the school leaders from Canada,

Australia, and England. One Georgian asserted, "Curriculum is only as good as the teachers who develop it. Implementation is only as good as the teachers who assume ownership of it."

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly, trends have appeared in all four groups of principals' perceptions of curriculum processes. It may be that more investigation of efficient and effective methods for developing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum is warranted, with cooperation and sharing of ideas cross-culturally being the ideal.

More importantly perhaps, as Australian Malcolm Skilbeck suggests, "The time has come for us to abandon the 'centralized/decentralized' dichotomy. The issue, for us, is how best to examine and evaluate roles and relationships that are complementary, or seem to be dislocated." (Skilbeck, 1986, p. 38) Such an endeavor, it would seem, would be beneficial to all the principals in this study. There need not be opposition between a nationally or provincially designed framework and a school-defined curriculum. The emphasis should be on the relationships between decision makers at various levels of the educational organization and among different members of the curriculum "system," as Skilbeck describes it. (Skilbeck, p. 38)

The present study appears to confirm the confusion of school leaders on responsibilities for curriculum decisions, yet simultaneously seems to support the participation of a variety of constituencies in the processes, with special support for teacher

involvement.

Decisions made closest to the children are among the most important ones we make. Educational leaders and policy makers must never lose sight of this. Our children's futures depend on it.

References available upon request

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS SURVEY

Number of students in your school: _____

Your position title: _____

1. Some school districts try to have a 3-to 5-year plan for curriculum revision in their district.

   a. Do you have such a master plan for curriculum development?

   _____yes _____no

   b. If yes: What is the title of the person under whose leadership it was developed? _____

   c. In your district, have you been involved in developing curriculum?

   _____yes _____no

2. How many curriculum subject areas, if any, were developed or revised during the past five years for your school? _____
   Please specify which subject areas:

3. Briefly list the steps you normally take in your school for developing curriculum:

4. To what degree did each of the following constituencies participate in the curriculum development process? Please circle only one in each line:

	Not at All	Very Little Input	Some Input	Heavily Involved	Not Applicable
Community representative(s)	0	1	2	3	NA
Board of Education	0	1	2	3	NA
Superintendent	0	1	2	3	NA
Assistant Superintendent	0	1	2	3	NA
Director of Curriculum	0	1	2	3	NA
Principals	0	1	2	3	NA
Assistant Principals	0	1	2	3	NA
Heads of departments	0	1	2	3	NA
Supervisors	0	1	2	3	NA
Teachers	0	1	2	3	NA
Teacher aides	0	1	2	3	NA
Parents	0	1	2	3	NA
Students	0	1	2	3	NA
University personnel	0	1	2	3	NA
Other: (please specify) ____	0	1	2	3	NA

5. From your experience, who should be involved in the curriculum development process? (You may check as many as apply):

_____Administrators	_____Board of Education
_____Supervisors	_____Parents
_____Teachers	_____Community Representatives
_____Students	_____University Personnel

6. Please rank the following items on their effectiveness for changing curriculum. (5 represents the highest or most effective rank. 1 represents the lowest)

_____Buy a curriculum from a commercial company
_____Ask university personnel to do it
_____Receive a curriculum from the state
_____Use a curriculum that was tried in another school
_____Do it yourself

7. Based upon your experience, do you favor using committees to develop curriculum?

_____yes _____no

If yes, what is the ideal number of members on a curriculum committee?_____
If no, why not? (Please check as many as apply):
_____Committees do not produce what is intended
_____Committees tend to be a waste of time
_____People involved do not have the expertise of adequate background
_____A committee is difficult to manage
_____Other:_____

8. Which of the following do you favor?

_____A national curriculum	_____A state curriculum
_____A local curriculum	_____Other:_____

9. Whose responsibility is it to ensure that a new curriculum is implemented after it is developed?

_____The school principal
_____The teachers
_____The director of curriculum
_____Other(s) _____
(please specify)

10. From your experience, how do you know that a curriculum is being properly implemented? Briefly explain.

11. Some school systems favor a quantitative or statistical evaluation of curriculum, while others favor qualitative, descriptive evaluations.

    Briefly, where do you stand in regard to this issue?

12. General comments about effective curriculum development and evaluation processes:

Research Hypotheses

1. It is hypothesized that secondary schools have a 3- to 5-year plan for curriculum revision crossculturally (Survey Item 1a). (Rejected)

2. It is hypothesized that curriculum development in secondary schools is normally under the leadership of the principal crossculturally (Survey Item 1b). (Rejected)

3. It is hypothesized that secondary principals are involved in developing curriculum (Survey Item 1c). (Accepted)

4. It is hypothesized that more than two curriculum subject areas are developed or revised during a 5-year period in secondary schools crossculturally (Survey Item 2a). (Accepted)

5. It is hypothesized that the major subject areas -- language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies -- are most frequently developed and revised in secondary schools crossculturally (Survey Item 2b). (Accepted)

6. It is hypothesized that secondary school principals crossculturally identify the following activities in developing curriculum: (a) assessing needs, (b) allocating resources, (c) establishing a scope and sequence, (d) evaluating, (e) obtaining administrative approval or direction (Survey Item 3). (Rejected)

7. It is hypothesized that community representatives, teacher aides, parents, students, and university personnel participate very little or not at all (0 or 1 on the Likert scale) in curriculum development crossculturally, and that school administrators and teachers participate moderately or very heavily in curriculum development crossculturally (2 or 3 on the Likert scale) (Survey Item 4). (Rejected)

8. It is hypothesized that there is no correlation between teacher involvement in curriculum development and the size of the school (Survey Item 4 and the request for number of students in sampled schools). (Rejected)

9. It is hypothesized that there is no difference crossculturally in secondary school principals' preferences for specific constituencies' involvement in curriculum development activities (Survey Item 5). (Rejected)

10. It is hypothesized that there is a significant correlation between actual and preferred constituencies involved in curriculum development, according to secondary school principals crossculturally (Survey Items 4 and 5). (Rejected)

11. It is hypothesized that there are no significant differences crossculturally in secondary school principals' preferred strategies for changing curriculum (Survey Item 6). (Rejected)

12. It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference crossculturally in secondary school principals' preference for committee utilization in curriculum development (Survey Item 7a). (Accepted)

13. It is hypothesized that the crosscultural mean number cited by secondary school principals for the size of a curriculum committee is 10 (Survey Item 7b). (Rejected)

14. It is hypothesized that secondary school principals crossculturally favor a local curriculum (Survey Item 8). (Accepted)

15. It is hypothesized that secondary school principals crossculturally are responsible for curriculum implementation (Survey Item 9). (Accepted)

16. It is hypothesized that secondary school principals crossculturally employ the following strategies for evaluating curriculum implementation: (a) classroom observation, (b) standardized tests, (c) meetings with teachers, and (d) teacher lesson plans (Survey Item 10). (Accepted)

17. It is hypothesized that there is no significant difference in secondary school principals' preferences regarding the nature of effective curriculum evaluation (Survey Item 11). (Rejected)

18. It is hypothesized that Georgia secondary school principals' responses to Survey Items 1-11 are representative of United States secondary school principals' responses as reported in the study by Martin, Saif, and Thiel (1986, 1987), utilizing the same instrument. (Rejected)

Statistical Techniques

The researcher used various procedures to analyze the data. The chi-square procedure was used to analyze data for Hypotheses 1, 3, 12, 13, 17, and 18. The content analysis procedure was used to analyze data for Hypotheses 2, 5, 6, and 16. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data for Hypotheses 2, 4, 6, and 16. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure was used to analyze data for Hypotheses 7, 9, 11, 14, and 15. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients was used to analyze data for Hypotheses 8 and 10.